

## Part II

# Prelude: Quality in Teaching

The focus in Part II papers is broadly on teaching itself and the views we bring to it. This is a vexed issue, worldwide, where quite varied approaches are taken to the selection and preparation of teachers and the same variations apply to their conditions of working.

Carol Nicoll, one of Australia's most broadly experienced educators, puts forwards four maxims, number four being: *'Teacher capability and teaching quality are at the heart of effective student learning. A lifelong lust for learning and opportunities to learn through community service can be made realities by consciously engaged and committed teachers. These people exist in all schools and should be treasured and supported'*.

Brian Caldwell speaks with the background of one who has worked in many countries. He raises concerns with the major movement in Australia to set standards across the curriculum. *'I wrestle with the fact that no nation that performs at or above Australia on international tests of student achievement has adopted, let alone successfully implemented, a standards movement like that which now "sweeps across Australian education"'*.

Colin Power has had unparalleled education experience on the world stage mainly through his 12 years heading up the education section at UNESCO in Paris, but it is significant that he sees the teacher-learner partnership still as the key. This leads him to recommend ways of strengthening this relationship. *'The powerful relationship between teacher and learner is central to the task of improving the quality and effectiveness of education. The research confirms that in any education system, it is, in the end, teachers that make the difference'*.

Ian Hill speaks from a similarly wide background from his experience in the International Baccalaureate Organisation in Geneva. He comments on one shortcoming of his own education. *'Transdisciplinarity was not something I experienced; the subjects stayed in separate boxes'*. This is a pattern which he finds inadequate. He contrasts this with the IB pattern. *'IB learners are enquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk takers, balanced, and reflective'*. But he

still sees the need for teachers who are committed to their task. *'It was the caring, committed, inspiring teachers who spurred me on – these are personal, attitudinal qualities which make the difference'*.

Joan Abbott-Chapman has a wide background in research on school performance. She is particularly concerned to identify why some students from a deprived background succeed at school in spite of the predominant pattern of failure for such students. She identified a personal quality of persistence which she called 'stickability' as one of two decisive factors. *'Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data showed that the individual's qualities of engagement and "stickability" were deciding factors in study persistence, along with the encouragement of an inspirational teacher'*.

Max Walsh has been working in the Philippines in recent years, during which time he has acted as a consultant in a number of Asian and Pacific countries. His is a reflective piece drawn from his personal experience in those settings. His particular concern is for the loss of motivation which often accompanies poor conditions in the classroom, *'...where severe overcrowding occurs then the systems foster, perhaps unwittingly, a mind-set in students that education is something to be endured until the end-point is reached and a qualification is collected'*.

Nancy Faust Sizer is maintaining an active role in American schools, a role she first undertook in company with her husband Ted Sizer in their groundbreaking initiative, the Coalition of Essential Schools. In her contribution she reflects on the role of the teacher and the strong interrelationship between the expectations of the teacher and those of the students. *'All jobs are complicated, but it seems to me that a teacher's job is more complicated than most. If you have eighty students, and most teachers in the United States have more than that, then you have eighty people whom you must know well, judge where they are in their learning, and use your time together to add value to what they know and can do. Furthermore, you must make the experience engaging to them, one they will deem worthwhile, both at the present and as they look back on it in the future'*.

Susan Pascoe writes from her broad experience, in a variety of roles, as CEO of the Catholic Education Commission in Victoria, then chief executive of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and then commissioner in Victoria's State Services Authority. Susan has also had an active role with UNESCO, including chair of the Australian National Commission. To all her roles she brings a deep commitment to students and to quality teaching. *'Maintaining a focus on teacher preparation, induction, professional learning and support should always be a central consideration in workforce planning for school education'*.

Francoise Caillods has seen education for a variety of viewpoints and has a vast experience arising from over four decades at the International Institute of Educational Planning, UNESCO, Paris. She looks beyond the immediate benefits of investment in high-quality education, not just as an extra, but as a vital part of the purpose. *'Other benefits are also expected from such an investment such as improved health, reduced crime, social cohesion, greater equity and justice'*.

Barry McGaw points out very clearly how powerful teachers' expectations are when it comes to either providing or inhibiting the learning of individual. Teachers' expectations also have an impact on important matters such as equity in education.